

STAND FIRM AGAINST THE MISUSE OF GLOSSOLALIA

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August 20, 2019

I. INTRODUCTION

- a. If you are a Christian, then you want as much of God as you can get.
- b. If you read your Bible, then you have noticed that there is a far cry between the experience of the believers in the book of Acts and Christians today.
- c. There are certain Christians who say that they have reclaimed the spiritual experiences of the Apostolic Age. Charismatics and Pentecostals.
- d. One of the things they say they have reclaimed is the gift of speaking in tongues.
- e. Since you want as much of God as possible, you may be worried that you are missing out. You may be wondering if you need to give it a try.
- f. Unfortunately, there are some dangerous false teachings and misuses of glossolalia in the charismatic movement that you need to be aware of.

II. TEXT

- a. **Acts 2:1-13** When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were staying. 3 They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and rested on each one of them. 4 Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were Jews staying in Jerusalem, devout people from every nation under heaven. 6 When this sound occurred, a crowd came together and was confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 They were astounded and amazed, saying, "Look, aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 How is it that each of us can hear them in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites; those who live in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts), 11 Cretans

and Arabs—we hear them declaring the magnificent acts of God in our own tongues.” 12 They were all astounded and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13 But some sneered and said, “They’re drunk on new wine.”

- i. This is the only detailed description of the true gift of tongues in Scripture.
 - ii. The Day of Pentecost.
 - iii. 120 Christians were gathered in the “Upper Room” for prayer in Jerusalem.
 - iv. The Holy Spirit came upon them and gave them the ability to speak in tongues.
- b. What is the meaning of “speak in different tongues”?
- i. Speaking clear, intelligible sentences in a language previously unknown to the speaker.
 1. **John MacArthur:** “The supernatural ability to speak precisely in a foreign language the speaker had never learned.”
 2. **John MacArthur:** “The supernatural ability to communicate in a foreign language unknown to the speaker.”
 3. **Norm Geisler:** “speaking complete and meaningful sentences and discourses in a knowable language to which one has never been exposed.”
 4. “Speak” (Gr. *Laleo*).
 5. “in different tongues” (Gr. *glossa*); meaning different languages.
 6. There were Jews from all over the world visiting Jerusalem for the festival of Pentecost. Many of the grew up speaking languages other than Aramaic – Luke mentions at least 16 different languages.
 7. These people heard the Christians speaking in their own languages.
 8. Native Judeans also heard the miracle, but because they did not speak in foreign languages, it sounded like the disciples were drunk.
 - ii. Some believe in a second type of “tongues”:

1. Described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12-14.
2. A non-human language, perhaps an angelic language, understandable only to God, unless someone with the spiritual gift of interpretation is present.
3. However, there is evidence against this:
 - a. The same expression (speak – *laleo*; in tongues – *glossa*) is used in Acts 10:46 and Acts 19:6 to describe the experience of Cornelius and the disciples of John the Baptist.
 - b. In Acts 11:15-17, Peter states that the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles (Cornelius and his household) in the same way as He had come upon the disciples at Pentecost.
 - c. 1 Corinthians 12-14 uses the same terminology as Acts 2.
 - i. In Acts, Luke uses *laleo* (to speak) in combination with *glossa* (tongues) four different times (Acts 2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6). In 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul uses forms of that same combination thirteen times (1 Cor 12:30; 13:1; 14:2, 4, 5 (2x), 6, 13, 18, 19, 21, 27, 39).
 - ii. Luke wrote the book of Acts five years after Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. If the experience in Acts 2 was different than the experience in 1 Corinthians, then Luke would not have used the same exact terminology.
 - iii. In both cases, the message spoken could be understood, either by those who already know the language, or by someone gifted with the ability to translate.

III. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES?

- a. **Acts 2: The fulfillment of prophecy and the confirmation of the gift of the Holy Spirit.**
 - i. The fulfillment of prophecy.

1. **1 Corinthians 14:21-22** “It is written in the law, I will speak to this people of other tongues and by the lips of foreigners, and even then, they will not listen to me, says the Lord. Speaking in other tongues, then, is intended as a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers.”
 2. This is a reference to Isaiah 28:11-12.
 3. Tongues were a sign for unbelieving Israel that God was doing a new thing through Jesus Christ that included Jews and Gentiles – all the nations of the earth.
- ii. The confirmation of the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 1. Before Jesus ascended, He commanded His followers not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Holy Spirit. Then they would have the power to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:4-8).
 2. The gift of tongues was confirmation that God had fulfilled His promise, and therefore they could begin their mission.
- b. Acts 10: The confirmation of God’s inclusion of the Gentiles into the faith.**
- i. Up to this point the gospel had not spread to the Gentiles.
 - ii. God sent Peter to Caesarea to preach to the Roman centurion Cornelius. After Cornelius and his family believed in Christ, they spoke in tongues, which was a sign to Peter and the other Christians that God was offering the gospel freely and equally to the Gentiles and Jews alike.
 - iii. In Acts 11:15-17, Peter explained to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem that the experience of the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit was exactly the same as what happened to the Jewish Christians in Acts 2.
- c. Acts 19:1-7: The confirmation that John’s disciples had received the Holy Spirit.**
- i. When Paul came to Ephesus, he encountered 12 men who were disciples of John the Baptist. They had received John’s baptism of repentance, but they had never heard of the Holy Spirit. It is possible that John told them about Jesus, but they had not heard about Christ’s death and resurrection. Their picture of Christ was

inadequate. Then Paul shared the gospel with them, and after they were baptized they spoke in tongues.

- ii. This confirmed to Paul that they received the Holy Spirit, which was evidence that they understood the gospel placed their faith in Jesus Christ. They had transitioned from disciples of John, to disciples of Jesus.

d. 1 Corinthians 12-14: The edification of fellow believers.

- i. Paul wrote about believers speaking in tongues in church meetings.
- ii. In a church meeting, one person would speak in tongues, and another person would interpret the meaning for the edification of the church. Both the interpretation and the miracle edified the church.
- iii. **John MacArthur** said, “The gift provided another way, before the NT was completed, for God to reveal His truth to His church – like prophecy but with the added impact of a linguistic miracle to authorize it.” (John MacArthur, *Strange Fire*).

IV. TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS OF TONGUES

a. Cessationism:

- i. **Definition:** The gift of glossolalia (speaking in tongues) ceased after the Apostolic Age and the completion of the New Testament.
- ii. **Extended Definition:** “Cessationism is the view that certain spiritual gifts (called sign gifts), such as tongues, and prophecy, and healing, were only for the apostolic age until the completion of the canon of Scripture. These gifts were given as signs to validate the teaching of the apostles. Once the canon of Scripture was completed, and the foundation of the church was laid by the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20), they were no longer needed.”
- iii. Examples of cessationists: John MacArthur and Norm Geisler.
- iv. Evidence: 3 Lines of Evidence

1. History: There is no record of Biblical glossolalia in Christian history from the time of the Apostolic Age until 1901, when the modern Pentecostal movement had its beginning.
2. Scripture: **1 Corinthians 13:8** “Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.”
3. Observation: The modern-day phenomenon of speaking in tongues does not in any way resemble the Biblical miracle of glossolalia.

b. Continuationism:

- i. **Definition:** “The view that all the gifts and experiences of the Christians in the first century are available and should be normative for Christians in all ages.”

V. FIVE BIBLICAL GUIDELINES FOR GLOSSOLALIA

- a. Whether you are a cessationist or a continuationist, the Bible gives clear guidelines for how the speaking in tongues is to be used.

i. Glossolalia is one of the spiritual gifts.

1. What does the Bible teach about spiritual gifts?
 - a. Every believer has a spiritual gift. **1 Corinthians 12:7** “A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good”
 - i. The list of gifts are found in:
 1. Romans 12:6-8
 2. 1 Corinthians 12:7-10
 3. 1 Corinthians 12:27-30
 4. Ephesians 4:11
 5. 1 Peter 4:10-11
 - b. A spiritual gift is an empowerment for ministry.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 12:7** “A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good”
 - ii. **Thayer’s Lexicon:** “Extraordinary powers distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the

reception of which is due to the power divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit.”

- iii. **Bill Gothard:** “A supernatural ability that God gives to a believer.” They are “sovereign manifestations of the presence and power of God to meet present needs.”
 - iv. Greek word for “gift” is *charisma*, which is the root of the word charismatic. It means a divine gratuity; a spiritual endowment; a miraculous faculty (Strong’s).
- c. The spiritual gifts are given for the edification of other believers, not for self-edification.
- i. Some claim that glossolalia is a private prayer language that edifies the one speaking in tongues, but the Bible does not say this; on the contrary, spiritual gifts are always used to serve other believers.
 - ii. **1 Corinthians 12:7** “A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good”
 - iii. **1 Corinthians 12:27-28** “Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, next miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, various kinds of tongues.”
 - iv. **1 Peter 4:10** “Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God.”
- d. The spiritual gifts are given, not earned.
- i. Some claim that the gift of tongues is a sign of spiritual maturity, or nearness to God.
 - ii. But spiritual gifts are not a result of spiritual maturity, but God’s grace.

- iii. The nature of a gift is that which is freely given; unmerited; unearned.
- iv. When you are born, you are given certain natural abilities – intelligent, athletic, artistic, physical beauty, etc. These are unearned. When you are born again, God gives you a spiritual ability, which is also unearned.

ii. Glossolalia is not one of the greater gifts.

1. In some Christian circles, glossolalia is the ultimate sign of spiritual maturity; and it is the ultimate blessing, filling you with power, joy, and making you feel close to God. Therefore, all Christians should earnestly seek it. But the Bible says that glossolalia is not even one of the greatest gifts. Why do I say that?

- a. It is either mentioned near the end of the lists of gifts, or not mentioned at all.
 - i. Of the five lists of spiritual gifts, tongues is only mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12.
 - ii. In 1 Corinthians 12, both times it is mentioned it is second to last, and then last.
- b. Paul instructs us that it is better to desire the gift of prophecy than the gift of tongues.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 14:1-4** “1 Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy. 2 For the person who speaks in another tongue is not speaking to people but to God, since no one understands him; he speaks mysteries in the Spirit. 3 On the other hand, the person who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement, and consolation. 4 The person who speaks in another tongue builds himself up, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.”

- ii. In other words, desire the spiritual gifts, but especially the gift of prophecy. Why?
 - 1. Without an interpreter, tongues don't do anyone any good, because nobody understands what you are saying.
 - 2. Verse 2 "the person who speaks in another tongue is not speaking to people but to God, since no one understands him."
 - a. Paul isn't saying that speaking in tongues is actually praying to God, but that, assuming it is not just gibberish, God is the only one who understands.
 - 3. On the other hand, prophecy (either predicting the future, or proclaiming God's word), edified everyone because it could be understood.
 - 4. Verse 4 "The person who speaks in another tongue builds himself up, but the one who prophecies builds up the church."
 - a. Without an interpreter, tongues only bulds up the person speaking. It makes him look super- spiritual. It draws the admiration of others. He gets attention.
 - b. But remember, the purpose of spiritual gifts is never for self- edification, but the edification of other believers.
- iii. For these reasons, it is better to desire the gift of prophecy than the gift of tongues.
- c. Paul states that the gift of prophecy is greater than the gift of tongues.

- i. **1 Corinthians 14:5** “I wish all of you spoke in other tongues, but even more that you prophesied. The person who prophesies is greater than the person who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets so that the church may be built up.”
 - d. The misuse of tongues can hurt the witness of the church.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 14:23** “If, therefore, the whole church assembles together and all are speaking in other tongues and people who are outsiders or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds?”

iii. Glossolalia is never commanded.

1. Never in the Bible is there a command or even an encouragement for believers to speak in tongues.
2. Never are believers told to pray in tongues.
3. Never are believers told that the way to get closer to God, or to receive more spiritual power, is by speaking in tongues.

iv. Glossolalia is not given to all believers.

1. **1 Corinthians 14:5** “I wish all of you spoke in other tongues, but even more that you prophesied. The person who prophesies is greater than the person who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets so that the church may be built up.”
2. **1 Corinthians 12:18-20** “18 But as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted. 19 And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.”
 - a. Paul’s point was that everyone does not have the same spiritual gift, but this does not make one Christian more important than another. All the gifts are needed. If every part in the body were the same,

it would not be a body. And if every Christian in the church had the same spiritual gift, it would be weak.

v. The Bible gives very clear instructions for the use of glossolalia in the church:

1. **1 Corinthians 14:27-28** “27 If anyone speaks in another tongue, there are to be only two, or at the most three, each in turn, and let someone interpret. 28 But if there is no interpreter, that person is to keep silent in the church and speak to himself and God.”
2. **1 Corinthians 14:33-36** “As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but are to submit themselves, as the law also says. 35 If they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home, since it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”
 - a. Only three at the most in a service.
 - b. Only one at a time.
 - c. Only if there is an interpreter.
 - d. Only men.

VI. THREE FALSE TEACHINGS ABOUT GLOSSOLALIA

a. Speaking in tongues is a necessary sign of salvation.

- i. The Bible clearly states that not every Christian has the gift of tongues, nor should they desire the gift of tongues (1 Cor 14:1-5)
- ii. The Bible does not teach that tongues are a sign of salvation.
- iii. The following are evidences that neither prove nor disprove salvation:
 1. Visible morality. Mt 19:16-21; 22:27
 2. Intellectual knowledge. Rm 1:21; 2:17
 3. Religious involvement. Mt 25:1-10
 4. Active ministry. Mt 7:21-24
 5. Conviction of sin. Acts 24:25
 6. Assurance. Mt 23
 7. Time of Decision. Lk 8:13-14
 8. Tongues. 1 Cor 13:1

a. There are false religions that speak in the same type of gibberish as much of the tongues found in the modern charismatic/Pentecostal movement – voodoo doctors of Africa; mystic monks of Buddhism; the founders of Mormonism; and some of the Roman mystery religions during the first century who used ecstatic babble.

iv. The following are the proofs of authentic salvation:

1. Holiness. 1 John 1:7 “If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”
2. Obedience. 1 John 2:3 “This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands.”
3. Faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 1 John 2:23 “No one who denies the Son has the Father; he who confesses the Son has the Father as well.”
4. Love for others, especially believers. 1 John 4:7 “Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.”

b. Speaking in tongues is a sign of sanctification (spiritual maturity).

- i. Charismatic churches often refer to themselves as “full-gospel churches,” as if those churches that don’t speak in tongues only have only have part of the gospel.
- ii. It is not the gifts of the Spirit, but the fruit of the Spirit that display Spiritual maturity. Gal 5:22-23
- iii. Not the gifts, but the graces.

c. Speaking in tongues is a manifestation of the Spirit’s filling.

- i. Charismatic churches also refer to themselves as “Spirit-filled” Christians and churches, as if those who don’t speak in tongues are not filled with the Spirit.
- ii. **Ephesians 5:18** “And don’t get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless living, but be filled by the Spirit.”
 1. What does it look like to be filled by the Spirit? (4 marks)
 - a. Singing together to God in worship. Eph 5:19

- b. Thankfulness to God in the name of Christ. Eph 5:20
- c. Submission to one another in the fear of Christ. Eph 5:21
- d. Harmony in the home:
 - i. Submissive support by the wife: Eph 5:22-24
 - ii. Loving leadership by the husband: Eph 5:25-33
 - iii. Respectful obedience by the children. Eph 6:1-3
 - iv. Discipline and instruction of the Lord by the parent. Eph 6:4
 - v. Respectful obedience and diligence by employees. Eph 6:5-9
 - vi. Leadership with fear and trembling by managers and employers. Eph 6:9
- iii. **Galatians 5:16** "I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh."
 - 1. What does it mean to walk by the Spirit? (2 marks)
 - a. Do not carry out the desires of the flesh? Gal 5:19-23
 - i. Sexual immorality. Gal 5:19
 - ii. Moral impurity. Gal 5:19
 - iii. Promiscuity. Gal 5:19
 - iv. Idolatry. Gal 5:20
 - v. Sorcery. Gal 5:20
 - vi. Hatred. Gal 5:20
 - vii. Strife. Gal 5:20
 - viii. Jealousy. Gal 5:20
 - ix. Outbursts of anger. Gal 5:20
 - x. Selfish ambitions. Gal 5:20
 - xi. Dissensions. Gal 5:20
 - xii. Factions. Gal 5:20
 - xiii. Envy. Gal 5:21
 - xiv. Drunkenness. Gal 5:21
 - xv. Carousing. Gal 5:22
 - b. Produce the fruit of the Spirit. Gal 5:22-23

VII. CONCLUSION

- a. Have you ever looked for your keys, only to realize they were in your hand? You were searching for something you already possessed.
- b. Many Christians worry that if they don't speak in tongues then they are missing out on an essential spiritual experience.
- c. They don't realize that if you are a Christian, then you already have all of God.
 - i. **Colossians 2:9-10** "9 For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ, 10 and you have been filled by him, who is the head over every ruler and authority."
- d. And God has already given you everything you need for life and godliness.
 - i. **2 Peter 1:3** "His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."
- e. Instead of seeking a spiritual experience, seek God. Seek to know Him more through prayer, and His word, and through sharing His truth with the world.